

Foreword by Brian Solis

MySpace[®] Marketing

Creating a Social Network to Boom Your Business



QUE[®]

Sean Percival

MySpace Marketing

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Foreword

The Poetry of Social Networking to Court Customers and Invest in Relationships

In the era of the Social Web, everything we create and share online is open to public discovery, interpretation, and feedback. It introduces our thoughts, emotions, passions, and insights to new people and erases the geographic borders and boundaries that prevented us from artfully and naturally connecting with like-minded people around the world.

Your digital identity defines who you are. And in this genre of Web-savvy content creators and purveyors, your online reputation does indeed precede you.

Perception is reality.

The Social Web on websites like MySpace has effectively introduced us to a digital land rush that allows us to stake a claim to the markets where we can excel in ways previously impossible. We're creating and populating online societies and global neighborhoods where we can contribute to, and directly benefit from, the proliferation of innovation, interaction, and subsequent commerce.

It's nothing short of an incredible, life-changing opportunity for you to demonstrate the value, experience, and knowledge you represent to earn and invest in the relationships that propel your business as well as your professional and personal brand.

Maintaining a central presence online on social networks, in addition to a company website or blog, provides you with an effective dashboard for building strategic relationships with the very people in that network who can help your business grow.

A strategically developed profile on MySpace where your customers and are active provides you with a home base for presenting your value proposition, managing relationships, and also proactively engaging with prospects, consumers, and partners.

MySpace has evolved into a powerful, highly integrated platform, showcase, and resumé for your social capital—online and in the real world. A social profile facilitates presence aggregation, channeling all online activity through one main hub. Simply said, it becomes a repository for our ideas, expertise, differentiation, experience, and every social media object we create and share. This ultimately transitions from a static web profile into a dynamic and collaborative destination for the brand *you*.

In Social Media, your personal brand is defined by the sum of its distributed parts. Whether you realize it or not, your blog posts, comments on other blogs, updates on Twitter, and the pictures you upload, contribute to your online persona.

It's the curation of all our disparate pieces (social objects) online that collectively paint a picture of who we are, what we represent, as well as our strengths and weaknesses. This brand is yours to shape, cultivate, nurture, and craft.

We are living in a Social Economy and it is defined by the exchange of ideas and information both online and in the real world. The value and state of the exchange is indexed by the dividends earned through new opportunities and alliances. Relationships are the new currency of the Social Economy as they fuel and extend interaction, insight, and loyalty, and in turn, contribute to the social capital of the individuals who actively invest in their personal branding portfolio.

It's how we instill and create trust.

It's how we convincingly compel action through the demonstration of true expertise.

It's how we build a bridge between our business and our customers.

Social networks are living and breathing communities that are rich with culture and supported by the ecosystems that people create and depend upon for increased vibrancy, interaction, and value.

These digital cultures are not unlike the societies that define our world today. Technology changes, but people don't.

While social networks exist to connect us to others, just like in the real world, relationships are governed by strategic rules of engagement and natural human etiquette. Relationships are not earned nor will they bear fruit if they're simply relegated as cogs in your viral marketing machine.

Establishing an effective online presence and building rewarding relationships can only be accomplished by unbiased observation and genuine immersion.

The study of social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology, teach us to first observe the behavior, interaction, and culture of a society before we try to become a citizen, let alone market to it.

The profiles in social networks are so much more than avatars—this is something that's easy to forget. They're not target audiences for your messages and sales pitches. They are extensions and representations of real people and they are online to establish relationships that are mutually beneficial—just like you.

Instead of simply thinking about social networks as new ways to communicate with friends, family, and associates or sell captive constituents, let's instead view these communities as the headquarters for our online brand, collective expertise, and also the nerve center for connecting to our stakeholders.

Participation and interaction, outside of a sell cycle is the minimum ante for induction into the ecosystem.

Let's start by first answering these questions to effectively prepare us for a successful immersion into new online communities:

What do you stand for?

What are your intentions?

What value do you offer to the community?

Who are our customers and where do they go for information?

Why are our customers online?

What are the needs and real “pains” of those you’re trying to reach?

How can you help, outside of selling something?

What will customers and peers say about their experience with you today and tomorrow?

It’s important to weigh, factor, and proactively contribute to the impression you want others to have when they stumble upon or intentionally find your profile or how they perceive, react and respond to your initial and future contact. This is the first step in defining and shaping your online brand as we create a solid foundation for relationship building.

No matter what world you live in, we are all responsible for the public relations of any organization we represent. Everything we do, whether we’re in PR or not, reflects on, and contributes to, the brand we represent.

Arming employees and our community with knowledge and expertise and empowering them to participate, creates an efficient, influential, and community-driven organization that stays in sync with stakeholders. It creates an active collective of influential voices who will help shape perception and provide help to those seeking advice. Instead of traditional top-down, us versus them marketing strategies, a relationship-powered approach commission the greater community to become an extension of your outbound activities, beliefs, knowledge, passions, and value propositions.

As marketing, communications, and service professionals with a heightened sense of social awareness and relevance, we earn the right to live and conduct business in the digital societies where we have invested in its maturation, education, and cultivation and the relationships that serve as its foundation and DNA.

We are both architects and builders who are creating the blueprints for and constructing the bridge that connects customers and the people who represent the companies they believe in.

To truly connect however, we must learn through listening to day-to-day online conversations related to our brand. This is the only way to honestly empathize with our customers—otherwise, we revert to common lip service.

We must observe the interaction and culture that connect the very people that contribute to a thriving community. We must become the customers we want to reach to genuinely engage with them. In the process we redefine sales, service, and marketing, by rebuilding our initiatives from a demographics-driven campaign to a more humanized approach—one that only inspires more meaningful activity, engagement, and results.

Building a bridge to our customers requires the humanization of our mission and our story.

It takes so much more than an understanding of the tools and technology that power social networks to inspire change and build long-term, meaningful relationships. It’s our job, duty, and responsibility to reach our community, their way, and teach others to do so along with us, whether it’s from within or externally.

It's one thing to be genuine, but it's altogether different to translate and effectively communicate what you epitomize to the various markets and what they're seeking.

Being human is far easier than humanizing your story.

Feel it.

Live it.

Breathe it.

Love it.

Embody it.

You are the personality and the soul of the brand you represent.

Actions speak louder than words and everything begins with listening. It is after all, the best listeners who serve as the best conversationalists. Listening reveals everything we need to know to effectively connect what we represent and what we know to the unique needs and questions of community participants. In the process, we become reliable and trusted resources.

Remember, people do business with people they respect and they continue to stay loyal because they trust the relationship with the people that represent the brand, not the brand in of itself.

In social networks and the all-encompassing Social Web, we earn the business and relationships we deserve. This is the poetry of social networking and relationship building.

MySpace is one of many popular social networks in a landscape which will only continue to evolve with the Web. But unlike other communities, MySpace has its own living and breathing ecosystem and thriving economy that attracts and congregates people and brands to actively engage with each other. It creates a veritable exchange that constructs an online second life that physically transcends into our real life.

MySpace is a thriving opportunity for small businesses, artists, and mainstream brands to connect with the very people who can not only become loyal customers, but those who we also empower and reward for establishing and extending online communities that carry our brands forward. MySpace is a rich and vibrant culture unto itself and rich with existing and potential brand ambassadors who can tell our story, even when we're not present to do so. All it takes is for us to first observe, identify, and listen to those people that we wish to engage. We then borrow from the science and lessons of anthropology and sociology to understand the behavior and dynamics that define the subcultures where we wish to participate. With an understanding of these digital societies and relevant psychographics fused with customer empathy and an adeptness for developing interpersonal relationships, we can adapt our value and story to transparently connect with tastemakers through genuine immersion.

Brian Solis is Principal of FutureWorks, an award-winning PR and New Media agency in Silicon Valley. He blogs at PR2.0, bub.blicio.us, and regularly contributes PR & tech insight to industry publications. Solis is among the original thought leaders who paved the way for Social Media. He's a cofounder of the Social Media Club, is an original member of the Media 2.0 Workgroup, and also contributes to the Social Media Collective. He is author of Putting the Public Back in Public Relations: How Social Media Is Reinventing the Aging Business of PR.

Introduction

We recognized from the beginning that we could create profiles for the bands and allow people to use the site any way they wanted to. We didn't stop people from promoting whatever they wanted to promote on MySpace. Some people have fun with it, and others try to get more business and sell stuff, like a makeup artist or a band, and we encourage them to do that."

Tom Anderson
MySpace cofounder

New Frontiers

Traditional advertising companies are very worried. Some of their most important demographics are not watching TV or reading magazines like they used to. Instead, you can find them online, spending the majority of their time navigating social networks like MySpace. These websites allow members to contribute, interact, and connect like never before. They forge new relationships, both personal and business-related. I guess you could say it's the modern-day equivalent of the diary, the local hangout spot, and the record store all rolled into one. On MySpace you can find a date for the weekend, a job, or even old classmates all in one visit. MySpace has been responsible for everything from marriages to divorces and even reuniting long-lost family members.

I Want MySpace, Not My MTV

Social network users spend, on average, 11 hours online per week, compared to 9.4 hours watching TV. Although heavy social network users still watch TV, 70% say their favorite time to spend online is during prime-time TV viewing hours.

Although the majority of its members use MySpace for communicating or online people-watching, thousands of businesses have also created their own pages for marketing purposes. This can take many forms, but the goal is pretty much the same in all cases: the more “friends” you have, the better. Befriending someone on MySpace can be compared to discovering a new business contact or lead. When you include these friends in your own social network, you are also creating a private advertising network at the same time. However, instead of the typical “shotgun blast” often found with traditional advertising, your social network now works like a net, allowing you to continually market to your ever-growing network.

Chances are you picked up this book because you already have experience with MySpace but you want to know more about its marketing potential. Perhaps you don’t have experience and wonder what you’re missing out on. Either way, this book will teach you some of my best secrets that I’ve used to help companies understand and monetize their promotions on MySpace. In the process, they created brand loyalty, received invaluable feedback, and had a great time doing it.

What Is MySpace Marketing?

MySpace was created primarily as a means for bands to promote their music to fans. It’s no surprise that businesses noticed the potential and started connecting with their “fans” as well. Today you find businesses of all types, from hairdressers to real estate agents, creating and marketing their own profiles on this massive network. In addition to multinational companies such as Adidas and Burger King, many small businesses have also embraced MySpace marketing to generate website traffic and leads. Converting this tangle of online human relationships into an effective promotional platform is what MySpace marketing is all about.

For the most part, marketing on MySpace can be broken into two types: paid advertisements and the more common method, which resembles guerilla marketing. Most companies take the latter approach, because running ads on MySpace can cost anywhere from \$7,500 to \$100,000 per month. This cost typically is out of reach for most companies, especially small businesses. Thankfully, MySpace marketing can work with any budget, because the majority of the promotion can be done for free. For companies with medium-sized budgets, you can also benefit from paid placements thanks to Google Adwords. We’ll cover both, but I’m sure you’re most interested in the free stuff, so there is a heavy focus on this.

The most important component of MySpace marketing is community. This is the key to MySpace's success and yours. Creating a community or social network around your promotion is a marketer's dream for many reasons. First, you get lasting brand recognition, because members will see your MySpace page several times through their normal usage. Second, you have the opportunity to capture visitors by joining them to your social network. This allows you to market to them repeatedly through various avenues on MySpace. Last, you are adding to the community just by being part of it and contributing. Marketing on MySpace is walking a fine line between advertising and personal relationships. In this book I'll show you how to take the first steps and continue to gain momentum.

Friending Is the New Advertising

In April 2007 an independent and comprehensive survey was performed to measure the impact that social networks have on marketing. The results were surprising, even to those who had already seen dramatic results firsthand. More than 40% of the 3,000 users questioned said they use social networks to learn more about a product. Additionally, 28% said they were referred to the product from an online friend, which adds great credibility to any promotion.

So what is all this talk about friends, and how do they relate to MySpace marketing? In a business sense, a friend on MySpace can be compared to a potential lead or existing customer. You gain friends by requesting friendship with other members and receiving incoming friend requests as well. It does come down to a popularity contest of sorts, where whoever has the most friends receives the most traffic. However, on MySpace, quality is usually better than quantity. Thanks to MySpace's rich demographics, it has no shortage of quality friends. It really doesn't matter what your promotion is for, because chances are your demographic already has members in the thousands, if not millions.

When we say "friending is the new advertising," we are confirming an emerging trend seen across the Internet. Surely you've noticed new features on some of your favorite websites that encourage you to join, contribute, and connect with other members. This is Web 2.0, and it is very social in nature. Millions of people are creating their own networks of both online and real-life friends in a truly engaging experience. Including your promotion in these networks gives you access to untold numbers of new connections.

Secrets of Success

With its army of 150 million users, MySpace currently holds the title of largest social network. In the annals of Internet history, few websites have experienced the sudden and explosive growth that MySpace has. When it comes to total traffic, MySpace is right up there with the big boys like Yahoo! and Google. At the time this book was written, MySpace was the fifth most popular website on the Internet.

MySpace also sees a staggering five million new user registrations each month. That's roughly equal to the population of Minnesota. This huge force of a website was founded in 2003 by Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolf and a very small team of programmers. How did these two unconventional executives create such a huge overnight success without a big marketing budget?

Their success can be attributed to a few things.

Good Timing

Friendster.com was actually the first to bring a social network to the masses in 2002, but it couldn't keep up with the demand. At the height of its popularity, Friendster.com could barely even serve web pages to visitors. Instead, visitors received lots of error messages as the servers tried to handle the huge surges of traffic. The MySpace founders were active members of Friendster.com, and they jumped at the chance to launch their own version. After just 10 days and probably unimaginable amounts of coffee, the first version of MySpace was launched. Although it had many bugs (and, let's be honest, it still does), this original framework and design are still used throughout MySpace.

Word of Mouth

To get the word out, MySpace held a company-wide contest to see who could sign up the most friends. Emails started to go out of the eUniverse offices in Los Angeles, and in a hyper-connected world, the invitations snowballed worldwide. Millions of frustrated Friendster.com users quickly jumped ship and in the process formed the largest online social network. The winner of the contest received \$1,000. Not a bad investment, considering that MySpace was bought for \$580 million two years later.

Precision Targeting

The first members invited to join MySpace were mostly photographers, artists, and other creative types. The founders knew that this passionate demographic would embrace the technology as a great way to showcase their work. Subsequent visitors found themselves inspired by this unique community and were eager to become part of it.

Leveraging Existing Contacts

At the time of MySpace's launch, its creator, eUniverse, owned CupidJunction.com, which had three million users. All these members were invited to join MySpace, giving the site a serious shot in the arm. eUniverse also advertised the launch on several other websites owned by the company.

Trust Your Users

Giving users almost complete freedom on MySpace empowered the very vocal and powerful Internet Generation. They took this freedom and ran with it when creating their own private space online. In the process they added “Fonzie” levels of cool to MySpace and brought all their real-world friends along with them.

The Future of Social Networks

These things are always hard to predict in an environment as dynamic as the Internet. However, the future of social networks has never looked better. Over the last few years they have continued to grow, with no signs of slowing. In addition to MySpace, an increasing number of other social networks are popping up, each offering its own twist on the popular medium. Although they have not reached MySpace levels of success, websites such as Facebook (www.facebook.com) and LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) have also signed up millions of members and offer great online destinations. Companies have even started to include social networking features on their existing websites, hoping to turn passive visitors into contributing members.

Countless businesses such as YouTube and Photobucket offer services that piggyback on social networks, and they also have seen an amazing response. Photobucket was so successful that MySpace purchased it and plans to integrate its feature into MySpace. Some YouTube videos get more views than prime-time TV shows. YouTube owes its success to none other than MySpace, where the majority of its videos are posted. The social network of the future will be a mashup of several companies, each offering its own unique service.

Let’s also not forget that the Internet Generation (people born between 1994 and 2001) has been the driving force behind MySpace. It’s safe to assume that subsequent generations will embrace these technologies and take them to even higher levels. We can’t discount the older generations, though. Recently they have started to join social networks in huge numbers and have even surpassed the high school kids who made MySpace so famous. Whatever the future holds, now is the time to capitalize and carve out some space for yourself or your business.



Must-Have Friends

By now you may have noticed that some MySpace users have huge social networks, sometimes with more than a million friends. These members are usually some of MySpace's early adopters who have experienced this popularity over time and through a solid marketing plan. These popular MySpace pages can be beneficial to your promotion if used properly.

I've found that in any type of online marketing, it can be incredibly powerful to research what others are doing, tweak to your needs, and then improve upon. MySpace marketing is no different, so this chapter takes a look at how some of the most popular profiles market themselves. You can learn from their experience, and in many cases, save a great deal of time. Advertising in new media like MySpace can be trial and error. By looking at others, you can quickly learn a few things right, and even a few things wrong.

Tom

www.myspace.com/tom

By default, MySpace president Tom Anderson is everyone's friend. Naturally, he has the largest network. At the time this chapter was written, his network included more than 180 million friends. Tom is typically the first person a new user sees, so this has given him somewhat of a celebrity status. The photo of Tom in front of a whiteboard has become an iconic image for the Internet generation (see Figure 5.1). It has been used on T-shirts and in several Internet parodies.



Figure 5.1

The public profile of Tom Anderson, MySpace president and cofounder.

Tom's placement on MySpace is also interesting from a marketing standpoint. It was a noble experiment in public relations and user experience to make a company's founder so visible and accessible to its users. Initially this made MySpace feel less like a website and more like a cool independent project. This excited millions, and they quickly signed up not only to watch its progress but to become part of it. Tom's profile is a hub for the latest MySpace news using bulletins and blogs to get the word out. What better way to reach your community than to use the tools that drive the community?

Delving a little deeper into the Tom page, you can see how it's also used to market MySpace-related products. Figure 5.2 shows a promotion for Sherwood, a new artist from the MySpace record label (yes, MySpace has a record label). I'll show you how you can deploy some of the same techniques in Chapter 9, "Generating Buzz with MySpace Blogs." This is a very powerful medium on MySpace because many users turn to this section to get the latest updates. The Tom profile is also used to post system news such as technical issues and new features.

As far as where your marketing and Tom's page fit in, there really isn't much to do here. You can keep Tom as part of your social network, but don't do any direct marketing through his page. His profile probably is maintained by staff (he actually uses a separate private profile for friends) and not Tom directly, so marketing done through his page might be considered spam and be deleted. Worse yet, they may remove your profile. As with all aspects of MySpace marketing, moderation is the key. Your promotion should be just enough to get the attention of your demographic without annoying the masses.



Figure 5.2

A sample of a blog promotion from the Tom MySpace page.

Tila Tequila

www.myspace.com/tilatequila

After Tom, the most popular person on MySpace is Tila Tequila, a model turned Internet celebrity thanks to MySpace (see Figure 5.3). Tila began experimenting with social networks in the form of Friendster.com, where she experienced similar attention and popularity. However, she received a little too much attention, and Friendster was forced to remove her profile. Tom and the other founders were well under way creating MySpace, and they asked Tila to be one of the founding members. Millions of page views later, *Time* magazine included her in its "Person of the Year" issue and called her "The Madonna of MySpace." Her social network is now just shy of 2 million friends, and her page has received more than 67 million visitors.

She has used this exposure to help launch her music career and several Tila Tequila-related products. I tried to contact Tila several times to ask her about how she uses MySpace marketing, but I did not get a response. She is probably too busy recording her new album or hosting her next party. We can, however, get a great idea of her MySpace marketing efforts by simply viewing her page.



Figure 5.3
The official profile of Tila Tequila.

Website

One of the best uses of MySpace marketing is directing visitors from your page to your official website. Once you bring someone to your website, you have more opportunities to monetize the visit or generate a lead. Tila Tequila runs a personal website at www.tilashotspot.com, where visitors can access all things Tila. There is also a subscription service, where for \$10 per month, a member gets access to exclusive content like photo galleries, videos, and live-chat sessions. The website also includes advertisements for other Tila-related promotions and a message board for fans.

Music

Lately Tila has been focusing on launching a music career. She has used her MySpace page to generate interest in and sales on her iTunes music store (see Figure 5.4). Although her background is in modeling, she has always been a musician as well and has performed in several bands. She debuted her new music video on YouTube and used MySpace comments to announce its availability on iTunes. This was an effective strategy. The video received over one million views, and her single landed in the iTunes top 100 songs list.



Figure 5.4

Tila uses the top of her page (the most valuable real estate) to announce her new single and music video.

Ringtones

The MySpace demographic is crazy about ringtones (a song that plays when your cell phone rings), so you'll see a lot of advertisements for this service. Many people are happy with their default ring, but many MySpace users customize their cell phones with ringtones they find on the Internet. Tila partnered with Boost Mobile to offer some of her music as ringtones.

This type of marketing is most beneficial to musicians, but the idea can be applied to other businesses as well. If you can align your product with something people will use as a ringtone, I highly recommend looking into this further. Services like Phonezoo (www.phonezoo.com) will create a free ring tone for you based on an MP3 file of your choice. You can even try to sell your ringtones through various services. However, if possible you should give away your ringtones because this will give you much greater reach and increased branding.

Online Gambling

Tila Poker (www.tilapoker.com) offers members traditional online gambling themed around images of Tila. I'm not a big fan of online gambling, and I can't recommend using

MySpace for its promotion. Because MySpace has so many young members, most are ineligible to play. Additionally, the industry itself is filled with fraudulent and deceptive practices. It also causes untold numbers of family problems, such as when someone loses his house due to an online gambling addiction. Try to avoid this industry. There are many other ways to generate revenue online.

Fashion

Clothes and fashion in general translate very well to the MySpace crowd, so many have tried to launch brands from their pages. Tila has tried the same but has had some trouble getting started. It seems with everything else she has going on, she just hasn't had time to focus on this. Her profile now states that an entire new line is on the way. If you want to include clothing as part of your promotion, try Zazzle (www.zazzle.com). It offers simple tools for designing and selling your own clothes and other accessories.

ForBidden

www.myspace.com/forbidden

Christine Dolce, or ForBidden as she is known on MySpace, has a similar success story to Tila. As one of the first MySpace members, she quickly achieved huge popularity and gathered over one million friends. This former cosmetologist has created a modeling career and appeared in such magazines as *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, and *FHM*. *Vanity Fair* called Christine "The Queen of MySpace." Like Tila, she promotes several products on her MySpace page, as shown in Figure 5.5.

Website

For only \$14.95 per month, you can become part of the "ForBidden Army." Here you get access to exclusive content like photos and videos, and you also get discounts on all ForBidden products in the store. Again, sending visitors to your website gives you countless opportunities to market to them. However, I don't think I agree with the subscription model. If a visitor wants to know more about you or your promotion, give him or her as much as you can for free.

As it turns out, ForBidden's fans didn't agree with the subscription model either. Just a few months after launching the site, it was closed down. Instead, she now offers a free private community for her many friends. Offering something like this is a great marketing idea because it allows you to take your friends with you. On an outside community like this, you have more control over the layout and better access to individuals as well.

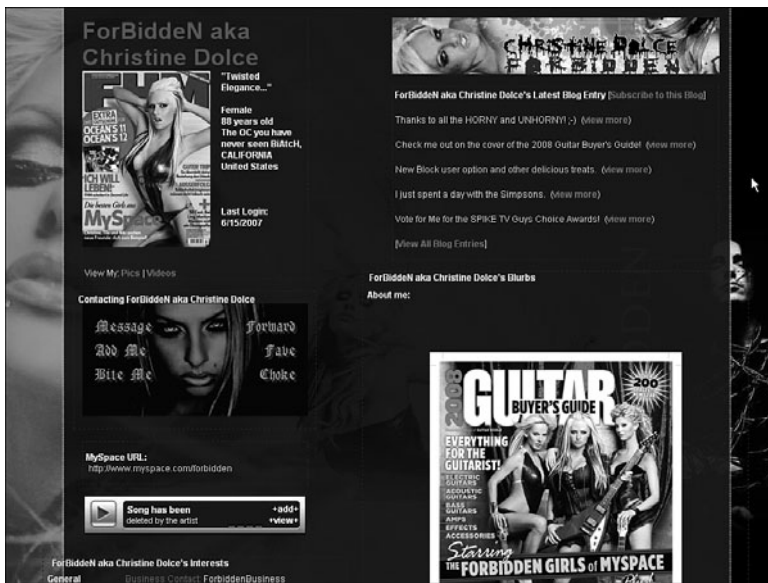


Figure 5.5
The sultry and very popular MySpace page of ForBidden.

Fashion

Christine has her own fashion line called Destroyed Denim (www.destroyedbrand.com). She seems to have had more success than Tila with this venture. She has posted to her blog that sales are improving, and new products are added regularly.

Dog Tags

Rock n Tags created a special product line of its customizable dog tags that featured ForBidden. While the idea sounds a little kooky, dog tags have always been popular with some segment of youth throughout the years. Promotional items like this can work for other promotions as well. Zazzle (www.zazzle.com) offers a huge line of products, from clothes to coffee mugs to mouse pads.

Perfume

For a short time, Christine sold Forbidden, the scent. This product is no longer featured on her profile, so we can only assume it wasn't the next Chanel No. 5. This is a good example for those experimenting with self-branding: don't take the idea too far.

Other Low Rankers

In all of the preceding cases, much of their popularity is because they were some of the first MySpace members. In addition to having a long history with the site, their profile numbers have a lot to do with their success. When you create a MySpace profile, you are assigned a unique, sequential user number. If you created a profile today, your user number would be something like 215,854,626. Users such as Tila and ForBidden have a profile number less than 100,000 because they were some of the first pages created.

Some advantages of these low-ranking user numbers include placement on other MySpace pages throughout the site. If you view any of their friends' social networks, you'll notice that the older the profile, the higher it's listed. You can also see this when using the MySpace search box to find someone. By default, older profiles are displayed as part of someone's "Top 8" friends unless the user customizes this area. This gives these profiles great exposure not only on that person's page but also on the thousands of friend pages that person is part of.

If you are creating a new profile, you don't have much control over what user number you are given. If you have an old MySpace profile in place, you may want to consider using it for your marketing efforts. If your existing user number is low enough (between 1 and 500,000), you may have noticed that you get many messages and incoming friend requests. This is because your profile typically is viewed many more times than a profile that was created yesterday. Using a low-ranked profile or becoming friends with other low-ranked profiles can help you kick-start your own social network.

Featured Profiles

On the MySpace home page you'll find the latest featured profiles. As shown in Figure 5.6, they look like traditional banner advertisements. Prices for this type of placement vary, but rumor has it that some companies pay as much as \$100,000 for the spot. When you click these, you'll notice that you don't leave the MySpace site. Instead, you are taken to a MySpace page for the promotion. This is part of the advertising package. It allows companies to customize their profiles in ways not available to the general public. Companies that have used this method include Adidas, Burger King, and Volkswagen.

While the profile is featured, the company receives lots of traffic from the home page and quickly amasses thousands of friends. Another great thing about these profiles is that MySpace allows them to continue beyond their featured campaign. To inquire about this type of promotion, click Advertise on the bottom of any page for the contact form. Just be sure to have your checkbook ready; you'll need it. Later in the book you'll learn about more cost-effective ways to advertise on MySpace using Google Adwords. In the meantime, you'll want to befriend each featured profile as it appears on the home page to take advantage of their traffic.

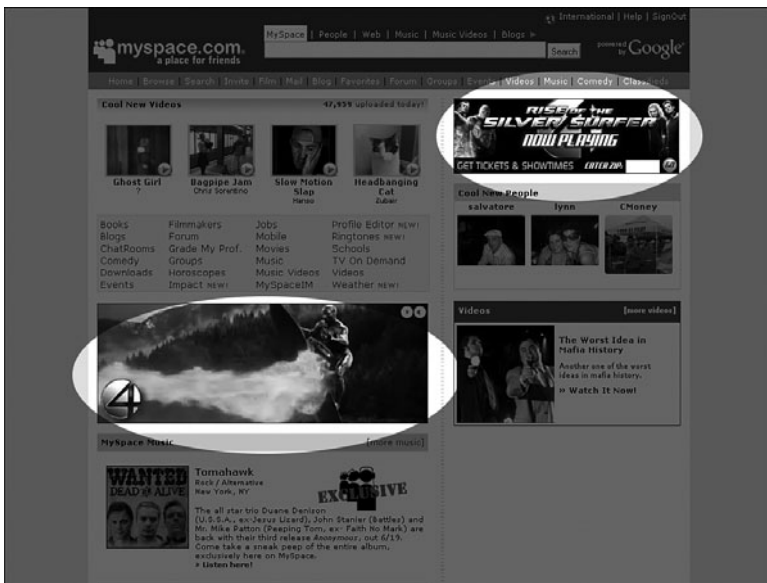


Figure 5.6

Many movies have used a featured profile for marketing on MySpace.

Piggybacking

There are a few ways you can “piggyback” off some of these popular and must-have friends. The first step is to send friend requests to the profiles just described and other low-user-number profiles. It’s easy to locate these types of profiles. Simply view someone else’s friend network to see who’s listed first. You’ll also find that many of these users are “loose circle” types, as discussed in the preceding chapter. They will accept a friend request from almost anyone and will gladly add your profile to their ever-growing social network. Once they have confirmed your request, you can begin building a presence on their MySpace page as well. Their profiles represent the best target for this type of work because they receive a large number of page views each day.

Leaving Page Comments

Periodically leave comments on MySpace pages. This can be something as simple as saying hello. If the person allows HTML-based comments, you can include things such as banners and clickable buttons. Be careful with this, however. If a user feels you are abusing his comments section, he can ban you from his network. I recommend leaving only one to five comments each month to avoid annoying the page owner.

Leaving Blog Comments

Leaving comments on a blog post is similar to leaving a comment on someone's MySpace page. The only difference is that the comments left on a blog post are usually specific to a topic being discussed. These comments are part of a threaded discussion and tend to be more focused than general messages left on a user's profile page. By leaving blog comments on popular MySpace user's blog posts (especially ones that fall in your demographic), you can piggyback some of their success.

Because some of these popular users receive a large number of blog readers, your profile is given a great opportunity to be seen. As you join the conversation, more users will begin to recognize your profile and, in some cases, click through to it. This can help establish your profile (and promotion) as an authority in your scene and most importantly drive traffic to it. To avoid being considered spammy, make sure you are contributing to the conversation and not simply promoting your profile. Establish a repertoire and even reach out to the community; your new friends will thank you.

Showing Your Friends Off

The "Top Friends" section is one of the most prized spots of real estate on a MySpace page. Most members use this page to show off their favorite eight (or sometimes more) friends. Naturally, for your MySpace marketing needs, you'll want to display some relevant profiles here. This can be a bit tricky because if your Top Friends are too appealing, you might lose traffic to them. One option is to set up additional MySpace profiles in line with your main demographic. Be careful, though, because making extra profiles can violate the MySpace terms of service. If possible, fill this section with other members of your company. If you are a band, display individual members' profiles here. You can also hide this section by using the following code. Simply add it to one of the sections in the profile editor to activate the code and hide this box completely:

```
<style>
.friendSpace{display:none!important;}
</style>
```

You can also generate traffic from the "Top Friends" section of other MySpace pages. To do this, simply encourage your existing friends to include your profile in their Top Friends. You'll find that many will be happy to do this. However, if you are not receiving much response to your request, you can add some incentive. In the past I have used everything from giveaways to coupons to entice my friends to respond. Many MySpace users with high friend counts will even sell you a spot in their Top 8. Of course, this may also violate the MySpace terms of service, but it's a great way to give your page additional exposure.

Vertical Friends

You may see the term “vertical” tossed around on the Internet in relation to marketing and industries. A vertical market is a niche market or a small subset of a larger industry. An example is scuba gear. This product is designed for a specific customer and usually isn’t purchased by the general public. These types of markets may be small, but they usually have a passionate and loyal following. MySpace marketing can tap into (or even create) the community of users to rally around such a product.

So when I say vertical friends, I’m talking about other MySpace pages that align well with your demographic. Because there is a good chance that people will come across these other pages, it’s wise to also have a presence there. How you will find these types of friends is specific to your promotion, but you can easily start by typing a few keywords into the MySpace search box. Once you find a few good pages, browse their friend networks to find similar targets. Send friend requests to anyone you think might be interested in your product or to “loose circle” friends who share similar interests. The next chapter looks at how to expand your reach further through highly targeted friend building.

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